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ABSTRACT

One of a series on library services to disadvantaged adults, this guide suggests ways the public library can use volunteers to expand library services. The library should plan to its volunteer program and develop job descriptions for the volunteers. Then volunteers can be recruited through advertising or community organizations. Volunteers can be trained through pre-service workshops, on-the-job training, or role playing. The library must make someone responsible for coordinating and supervising volunteers. A bill of rights for volunteers, a list of five libraries with successful volunteer programs, and 10 suggested readings are included. (PF)

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LIBRARY SERVICE GUIDES

Appalachian Adult Education Center

UTILIZING VOLUNTEERS IN EXPANDING LIBRARY SERVICES TO DISADVANTAGED ADULTS

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APPALACHIAN ADULT EDUCATION CENTER

Public Library Training Institutes
Library Service Guide No. 5

UTILIZING VOLUNTEERS IN EXPANDING SERVICES TO DISADVANTAGED ADULTS

by

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Revised October, 1974

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Preface

This guide is one of a series on library services to disadvantaged adults. The purpose of the series is to explore alternative ways public libraries can expand services to this special group.

Each guide attempts to recognize the differences among public library budgets, staff size and training, and the differences among the communities libraries serve. Each guide deals with a particular service and, where possible, suggests several alternative ways the library can provide that service to disadvantaged adults. The library, then, can and should further adapt the suggestions to fit the resources and needs of its local community.

The guides combine (1) a thorough search of the library literature; (2) the knowledge of professional librarians, who wrote many of the guides and evaluated the entire series; and (3) the experience of the Appalachian Adult Education Center (AAEC) in designing interagency educational programs for disadvantaged adults.

The AAEC has worked with state, regional, and local public libraries in seven states in projects funded by the Bureau of Libraries and Learning Resources of the U.S. Office of Education. In one project, four urban and three rural centers demonstrated ways public libraries and adult basic education programs could improve their services to disadvantaged adults by coordinating efforts in reader guidance, recruitment, library orientation, community referral, and in the selection, use, and delivery of materials. The AAEC also conducted institutes in local public libraries in seven states in designing and implementing library services for disadvantaged adults.

Work on those and other projects led to three conclusions, upon which the guides are based: (1) that undereducated adults need information and services to help solve problems; (2) that the public library can meet those needs through adjustments in procedures and interagency cooperation; and (3) that the materials and services required for disadvantaged adults are useful and useable to all adults.

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DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

AAEC—Appalachian Adult Education Center, a regional center for the demonstration of improved educational opportunities for disadvantaged adults. The AAEC has worked with public libraries in eight states in designing expanded public library services for disadvantaged adults.

ABE—adult basic education, instruction for adults, sixteen or older and out of school, in the academic skills leading to high school equivalency and instruction in coping skills areas such as health, housing, jobs, family, and money management. ABE may be offered by public schools, adult learning centers, libraries, churches, community colleges, volunteers and other groups, and with vocational educational programs.

Coping skills—the abilities (1) to define a problem as an information need; (2) to locate the needed information in the community; (3) to process the information—read, listen, relate, and expand; and (4) to apply the information to the problem.

Disadvantaged adult—a person sixteen years old or older who is out of school with less than a high school diploma, who reads below the tenth grade level, or whose family income is below a poverty index.

Volunteer—one who offers his services of his own free will without pay.

INTRODUCTION

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Volunteers

Using volunteer workers is one way the library can expand its services to disadvantaged adults. Volunteers can perform a variety of tasks both in and out of the library, and can help the library expand its services to disadvantaged adults by:

- improving public relations
- involving the community with the library
- being aware of the information needs of the community
- bringing enthusiasm and a fresh outlook to the library
- helping increase staff size and services without greatly increasing the budget, and
- freeing librarians to spend more time developing services for the disadvantaged, and working with disadvantaged adults in one-to-one services

In the Library

In the library, volunteers can

- work a reception desk
- work an information desk

– work the circulation desk	**Outside the Library**
– show films	
– take care of audiovisual equipment	
– fill orders for books-by-mail	
– make posters, displays, fliers, and exhibits	
– serve refreshments to tour groups	
– conduct story hours	**This Guide**
– shelve books	
– help with reader guidance	
– type	
– process new materials	
– repair materials	
– work in the technical processing division	
– gather and process information for information and referral services	
– work in a community information and referral center or community hot line housed in the library	

Outside the library, volunteers can

– work in the bookmobile

– deliver materials to shut-ins and to remote areas

– maintain rotating or deposit collections

– help with outreach services

This guide suggests ways the public library can use volunteer services effectively while expanding its services to disadvantaged adults. It is divided into the following sections:

(1) planning

(2) recruiting volunteers

(3) training and supervising volunteers

(4) possible problems

(5) costs

(6) what other libraries have done, and

(7) suggested readings

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PLANNING

Permission of the Board

Working with volunteers requires careful planning. The first step should be getting the permission of the board of trustees. As the governing body of the library, the board will want to know what the library plans to do, why it wants to do it, and about how much it will cost. The board should also receive regular progress reports.

Meeting with the Staff

The next step is involving the entire staff in a planning meeting, which should answer these questions:

What can volunteers do in the library?

In what areas are they needed most?

How many volunteers are needed?

How will the library recruit, train, and supervise volunteers?

Who on the library staff will be involved in recruiting, training, and supervising?

What will be the relationship of the volunteers to the rest of the staff?

Will volunteers threaten the job security of staff members?

Will this be an ongoing program or a temporary one?

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Job Description

What are the library's policies on injury insurance, travel, and reimbursement?

These planning meetings should produce a detailed job description for each job to be filled. A written job description form helps clarify what the library needs and expects of volunteers. Here is a sample:

VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTION*

Position _____

Purpose of job _____

Area of responsibility:

Sample tasks:

Responsible to _____

Qualifications, if any:

Time needed _____

Training, if any:

*Adapted from Stenzel, Anne. K. and Feeney, Helen M. *Volunteer Training and Development, A Manual for Community Groups.* New York: The Seaburg Press, 1968.

Whether you choose this form or make one of your own, the form should include

- the title of the position to be filled
- the purpose of the job
- its major responsibilities
- the name of the staff member who will supervise the volunteer
- whether the job is a continuing one or for a specific length of time
- how many hours per week required and whether this will fluctuate
- whether there are any qualifications for the job
- whether there will be any formal training

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

With the permission of the board, plans for using volunteers, and job descriptions of the positions to be filled, the library staff can begin recruiting volunteers to fill the jobs. That means publicizing the need, contacting sources of volunteers, interviewing, and following up.

Publicity

Some people will not require much persuasion, but will gladly volunteer if they know there is a need. Effective publicity makes the need known. The library might place posters in the library and outside the library, in banks, waiting rooms, stores, churches, and agencies that serve disadvantaged adults. Fliers, passed out or mailed to patrons, could carry the same message. Free public service announcements on local radio and television stations is another way to recruit. Whatever the medium, the message should include

- the name, address, and phone number of the library that needs volunteers
- the kind of help that is needed
- how much time is required, and
- who to contact at the library for more information, or for an interview

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Here are some examples of the kinds of publicity other libraries have used to recruit volunteers.

El Paso Public Library
El Paso, Texas

BE WISE, BE A LIBRARY VOLUNTEER*

Become one of our volunteers and have a real job experience this summer. You will be assured of an interesting orientation about the library, on-the-job training, a good work experience, and the possibility of a reference when you have finished your summer with us.

WHAT KIND OF JOBS CAN YOU DO FOR US? The following are just a few of the job possibilities available at the El Paso Public Library:

Circulation Assistant

People are needed to check in and check out books at the circulation desk.

Checkout Stand Aide

We need someone at this desk at all times to check to see that people have not forgotten to check out their books when they leave the library. Having you there will relieve a regular employee, who will be able to do some other job behind the scenes.

Shelving Assistant

Hundreds of books need to be put back on the shelves every day as they are returned. You can help us so that customers will find the book they want on the shelf.

Typists

To type overdue notices, booklists, stencils, index cards. You have to know how to type, but speed is not required.

Picture & Pamphlet Collection Assistant

To select and mount pictures for our picture collections that are used by students, teachers, artists, and many other patrons. To help us weed out old pamphlets and replace them with new ones.

*Goodman, Helen C. "Volunteers in El Paso." *Library Journal*. Vol. 97, May 1, 1972, p. 1675.

YOU MAY VOLUNTEER FOR AS LITTLE AS TWO HOURS A DAY, ONE DAY A WEEK. A training program will be held from 2 to 4 P.M. on Monday, June 7th. If you are interested, please call Mrs. Goodman at 543-6021 or 543-3804.

RECEPTIONISTS FOR ART GALLERY EXHIBITS ARE NEEDED

Birmingham Public Library
Birmingham, Alabama

Adult Basic Education-Library Center
Birmingham Public Library
2115 7th Ave., No.
Birmingham, Alabama 35203

Phone 252-8582

OUR OBJECTIVES

To serve the economically disadvantaged or functionally illiterate

To discover those in need of adult basic education

To help adults with basic coping skills through adult education programs

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS

To recruit prospective adult learners

To introduce library resources to non-users

To investigate and receive in-service training in adult education and library services

To act as a liaison between library and ABE groups

I WILL VOLUNTEER

Name _____ **Date** _____
Address _____ **Phone** _____

Contact: Mrs. William C. Jones
Phone 879-5141

Contacting Sources of Volunteers

If the community has organizations that do volunteer work, the librarian should get in touch with the leaders of the organizations to ask their help in finding volunteers. They, like the board of trustees, must be convinced that there is a need for volunteer help. The librarian can ask to address their membership, to pass out fliers, sign up prospective volunteers, or arrange for interviews.

A library staff member speaking to a group should be able to:

- hand out accurate job descriptions
- outline the intended expansion of services
- answer questions
- sign up interested volunteers.

These organizations are possible sources of volunteers:

- Friends of the Library
- Church groups
- Community groups
- Women's clubs
- Junior League
- Urban League
- Junior Chambers of Commerce
- Church Women United
- Book Clubs
- Teachers organizations—both active and retired
- PTA
- YWCA
- Retired librarians
- High school and college students
- Senior citizens groups
- The handicapped
- Groups that already serve disadvantaged adults
- Red Cross
- Welcome Wagon Organizations
- Local chapters of the National Affiliation for Literacy Advance (NALA)
- Literacy Volunteers

– Any agency that sponsors a clearinghouse for volunteers

– Former volunteers. (Even if they are not able to work again, they may know someone else who would be interested.)

– Local recreation departments. (Some cities have a volunteer coordinator working out of the recreation department who screens volunteers for all departments.)

– ACTION, 806 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20625 (202) 393-3111

ACTION has a number of volunteer programs, such as RSVP, the Retired Senior Volunteers Program. ACTION will have more information.

Interviewing Volunteers

If several people apply for one opening, the librarian will have to decide who is best qualified for the job. The interviewers should include the person who will supervise the volunteer, and the interview should clarify these things about the prospective volunteer:

- what he can do
- what he wants to do
- if he understands what is expected of him on the job: times, responsibilities, relationships to other workers
- if he understands how he fits into the functions of the library, and how his contribution will help
- what his commitments are, and what times he will be able to devote to volunteer work

During the interview, the interviewer should elaborate on the information in the job description. The interviewer should explain:

- what is expected of the volunteer in terms of the job itself, training, if any, and time required.
- why the volunteer's job is important
- the drawbacks, if any. (It is better to point out some of the dull parts of the job now rather than have the volunteer become bored and dissatisfied later.)
- the rules by which a volunteer should conduct himself: show the prospective volunteer that the library expects him to behave in a businesslike manner.

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After the interview, the interviewer should jot down his impressions of the prospective volunteer. This written report plus the interview itself will help the library select an appropriate volunteer. An interview report form like the one that follows might be useful.*

INTERVIEW REPORT

To be filled out immediately after interview

Name of volunteer _____ Date _____

Address _____ Phone _____

☐ New to Library ☐ Male

Sex

☐ New to Volunteering ☐ Female

Age (estimate) _____

1. Relying on your instincts, state your impressions of the prospective volunteer in a few key works.
2. Special interests:
3. Special skills:
4. Volunteer experience, if any:
5. Work experience, if any:
6. What could the volunteer do for the library?
7. What times does he have free?
8. What was his reaction to a discussion of disadvantaged adults?
9. Any other comments:

Interviewer's name _____

*Adapted from Stenzel and Feeney, *Volunteer Training and Development, A Manual for Community Groups*, 1968.

Following Up

For good public relations it is very important to contact everyone who signed up. While the library may not be able to use everyone who has expressed an interest at this time, more volunteers may be needed later on.

TRAINING AND SUPERVISING VOLUNTEERS

Orientation

The first part of a volunteer's training should be an orientation session, a general introduction to the library's services. It should explain the services that the library is attempting to offer to disadvantaged adults: the number of disadvantaged persons in the community, their special information needs, and how library staff members should conduct themselves in offering services. It is important to stress *patrons* before the *activities* involved in maintaining the collection.

A new volunteer should get a tour of all the library facilities: the bookmobile, staff lounges, coat rooms, and his own work area. The librarian should introduce him to the rest of the staff, and be sure he knows who his supervisor is and with whom he will be working. Stress that he is a member of the staff and will be treated accordingly. It is a good idea to arrange for him to observe library staff members working with disadvantaged adults. When the orientation is over the volunteer should know the overall function and purpose of the library as well as the role he will play.

Training

The three most common methods for training new volunteers are the pre-service workshop, on-the-job training, and role playing.

Workshops

If the library has employed a number of volunteers to do one task, a workshop is the easiest way to train them all at one time by bringing them together with members of the staff. The length of the workshop would depend on the complexity of the job, but usually a few hours will suffice. Library staff members would conduct the workshop.

On the Job Training

If the library employs only a few volunteers, they can be trained as they begin working. On-the-job training gets the volunteer involved with patrons and the work right away, cutting down on the risk of boredom, giving the volunteer a sense of accomplishment, and letting the volunteer learn by doing.

Training on a one-to-one basis works best. It is a good idea to team up a new volunteer with a staff member or a seasoned volunteer who is familiar with the job. Handing out written instructions for each job avoids confusion and gives the volunteer something to refer to later. If staff members seem unsure of themselves in structuring and supervising jobs, the librarian may have to train the volunteers and their supervisors together.

Role Playing

For those volunteers who are going to work with disadvantaged adults, role playing is a valuable form of training. Changing roles lets the volunteer see how important his attitudes, clothes, gestures, and tone of voice are when working with disadvantaged adults. People who work directly with disadvantaged adults must be sensitive, sincere, and not easily rattled. The *Handbook for Volunteer Reading Aides* by Norma Brookhart, published by Lutheran Church Women, 2900 Queen Lane, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19129, gives some insight into interacting with disadvantaged adults.

Supervising

Volunteers can't be recruited and trained and then forgotten. Volunteers, like other members of the library staff, need support, encouragement, and continuous training by a supervisor. It is almost essential to have a coordinator or supervisor for volunteers. This person could be a staff member or a volunteer, and would direct the activities of all the volunteers: assigning jobs, making out time schedules, doing additional or advanced training, preparing written instructions, and arranging for last minute replacements. All volunteers would be responsible to the volunteer coordinator as well as to their immediate supervisors, and should be able to express any grievances to the coordinator. The volunteer coordinator should remember to:

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– treat volunteers as part of the staff, letting them use staff facilities and have staff privileges

– assign meaningful work

– give each volunteer one task and refrain from interfering unnecessarily

– schedule each volunteer a definite time which is convenient to him

– check with him to make sure he can be there—as a reminder and a reinforcement of how important his work is

– carefully plan the work to be done and always provide written instructions

– have back up work ready, if one job is completed

– treat volunteers courteously—they are donating their leisure time and receive no pay

– give some sort of recognition for the job they are doing—an appreciation ceremony, a luncheon or small party, service pins or certificates, or an article in the local newspaper.

The Stark County District Library in Canton, Ohio, outlined the following "Bill of Rights for Volunteers."

BILL OF RIGHTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

1. The right to be treated as a co-worker—not just free help . . . not as a prima donna.

2. The right to a suitable assignment . . . with consideration for personal preference, temperament, life experience, education and employment background.

3. *The right to know as much about the organization as possible*—its policies . . . its people . . . its programs.

4. The right to training for the job . . . thoughtfully planned and effectively presented training.

5. The right to continuing education on the job—as a followup to initial training . . . information about new developments . . . training for greater responsibility

6. *The right to round guidance and direction* . . . by someone who is experienced, well informed, patient and thoughtful . . . and who has the time to invest in giving guidance.

7. The right to a place to work—an orderly, designated place . . . conducive to work . . . and worthy of the job to be done.

8. The right to promotion and a variety of experiences—through advancement to assignments of more responsibility . . . through transfer from one activity to another . . . through special assignments.

9. The right to be heard—to have a part in planning . . . to feel free to make suggestions . . . to have respect shown for an honest opinion.

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10. *The right to recognition—in the form of promotion* . . . and awards . . . through day-by-day expressions of appreciation . . . and by being treated as a bona fide co-worker.

PROBLEMS

A number of problems may arise when employing volunteers, but by anticipating them, the librarian may be able to solve them quickly or avoid them altogether.

Problem The volunteer lacks consistent commitment.

Solution *Careful interviewing, thorough orientations to the purposes of the library, and follow-up. Volunteers must be kept aware of the importance of their contribution, its effects on the library's program, and the effects of the library's programs on the community.*

Problem Lack of faith in the ability of the disadvantaged adult to change or benefit from a new service.

Solution *Extensive discussion and role playing concerning the needs of the disadvantaged with evidence of changes from other programs.*

Problem Problems with scheduling, baby-sitters, and transportation.

Solution *Sometimes, for any number of reasons, volunteers cannot come to the library at their scheduled time. One way to solve this problem is to have a list of possible replacements who could step in at the last minute. Volunteers should be*

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	encouraged to share their time problems with the volunteer supervisor as far ahead as possible, to give the library time to find replacements. Some people should be discouraged from volunteering if their commitments at home are too great. While many volunteers can provide transportation, some, particularly the disadvantaged and the elderly cannot. The volunteer supervisor may have to arrange car pools, provide transportation, or find out if any buses have routes near the library.
Problem	The do-gooder.
Solution	*Volunteers, after all, are volunteering for their own reasons. What is not needed is someone whose purpose is self-aggrandizement to the detriment of service. Such a person may not have the sensitivity toward the disadvantaged needed to work with them. The interviewer should be on the lookout for an authoritarian, punitive, blaming or an overly sympathetic attitude in the potential volunteer. What is needed is not sympathy, but empathy and a belief in human equality. However, with sensitive training, many do-gooder types can offer splendid services. Volunteers should be committed to what the library is trying to do in providing information to disadvantaged adults.*

Problem	Paid staff may resent volunteers or be jealous of their contributions.
Solution	*One administrative staff member should handle such problems. This person could suggest that the resentful staff member have an informal lunch with a volunteer to help to break down barriers.*
Problem	The volunteer may suggest many ideas and wonder why they are not accepted.
Solution	*All suggestions should, of course, be encouraged and considered. If the suggestion is impractical, however, the librarian should carefully explain to the volunteer why the suggestion would not work in the context of the library's program.*

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COSTS

No new program in the library is entirely without expense. The following cost items are in descending order, the most expensive first.

Staff Time

Staff time is the library's biggest expense. Staff time will be taken for organizational meetings, trustee meetings, addressing organizations, writing publicity releases and letters, making public service announcements, conducting workshops, on-the-job training and, most expensive of all, supervising the work of volunteers. If the volunteer coordinator is himself a volunteer, much of this time can be saved.

Training

The library may want paid consultants to sensitize volunteers to disadvantaged clientele.

Materials

Fliers can usually be printed for two to three cents a copy. The costs of posters will vary. Perhaps an amateur artist on the staff could make posters to publicize the library's need for volunteers.

Insurance

The library's liability insurance costs may have to increase to cover volunteers on the job.

Transportation

Volunteers should be expected to provide their own transportation. Some of the most successful volunteer

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	workers, however, are recruited from the disadvantaged, and may need to have their transportation costs covered.		

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WHAT OTHER LIBRARIES HAVE DONE

The following are some of the libraries that have had successful volunteer programs.

San Leandro Community Library Center, San Leandro, California 95177

This library used the services of a volunteer coordinator employed by the city recreation department. The volunteer coordinator recruits and screens volunteers, who perform jobs throughout the library: filing pamphlets, typing, indexing, and manning book sales.

El Paso Public Library, El Paso, Texas 79940

The El Paso Public Library recruited volunteers from agencies that serve disadvantaged adults, such as the Mayor's Youth Council and the Manpower Training Center. Some handicapped people were also recruited.

Mount Vernon Public Library, Mount Vernon, New York 11151

The library sponsored a program for Literacy Volunteers, a national volunteer organization, and supplied a room for tutoring and special materials for new readers.

ABE-Library Center, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, Alabama 35203

Volunteers worked in the ABE center in the library, and Auburn University began a program to train volunteer recruiters.

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Sarasota Public Library, Sarasota, Florida 33578	The library, along with the American Red Cross, organized a successful volunteer program. The Red Cross Library Volunteers perform many routine duties in the library so librarians can spend time with patrons.		

SUGGESTED READINGS

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Background Information

American Library Association. "Guidelines for Using Volunteers in Libraries." *American Libraries.* 2:407-408. April, 1971.

Bretlinger, H.R. "Volunteer Services at the Cornell Public Library." *The Bookmark.* 23:292-294. July, 1964.

Goodman, Helen C. "Volunteers in El Paso." *Library Journal.* 97:1675-1677. May 1, 1972.

Matley, Marcel B. "Harnessing Volunteer Energy in a Community Library." *Wilson Library Bulletin.* 46:828-833. May, 1972.

Stenzel, Anne K., and Feeney, Helen M. *Volunteer Training and Development, A Manual for Community Groups.* New York: The Seaburg Press, 1968.

Student Volunteers: A Manual for Communities. Washington, D.C.: The National Student Volunteer Program, Volunteers in Service to America, and ACTION.

Swanker, Esther M. "On the Care and Feeding of Volunteers." *Library Journal.* 97:1241-1245. April 1, 1972.

Manuals

This *Library Service Guide* does not discuss the recruitment and training of volunteers to work in adult basic education programs. The following three manuals cover this topic well and give valuable information for working with disadvantaged adults.

Guidelines for Adult Basic Education Volunteers. By Alice M. Leppert. Church Women United, 1971.

Handbook for Adult Education Volunteers. Prepared by Bobbie Griffin and Sheila Guest. Printed by the Huntsville Area Vocational Technical Center, Huntsville, Alabama.

Brookhart. Norma. *Handbook for Volunteer Reading Aides.* Lutheran Church Women, 2900 Queen Lane, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19129, 1972.

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LIBRARY SERVICE GUIDES

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2. Assessing Community Information and Service Needs
3. Using Pamphlets with Disadvantaged Adults
4. Deposit Collections of Special Materials for Disadvantaged Adults
5. Utilizing Volunteers in Expanding Library Services to Disadvantaged Adults
6. Books By Mail Services: Moving the Library to Disadvantaged Adults
7. Evening and Weekend Library Services for Disadvantaged Adults
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10. Working with Library Trustees to Expand Library Services to Disadvantaged Adults
11. Reader Guidance Services for Disadvantaged Adults
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